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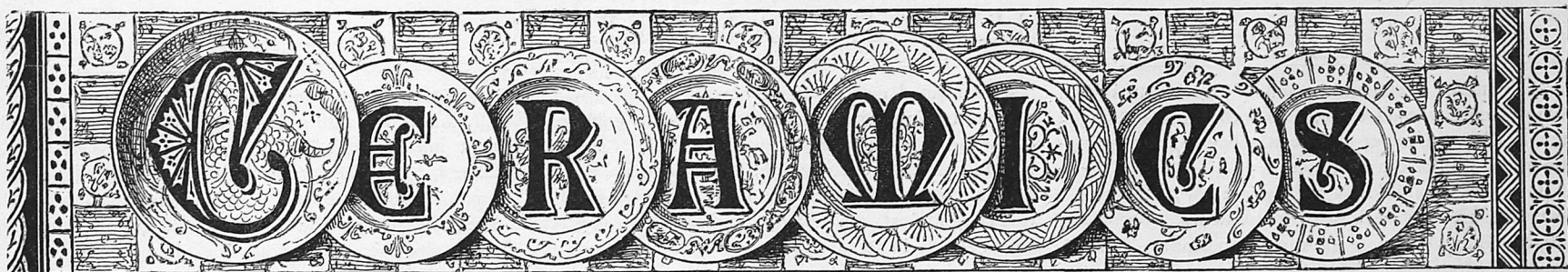
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PROPRIETY IN CERAMIC DECORATION.

II.

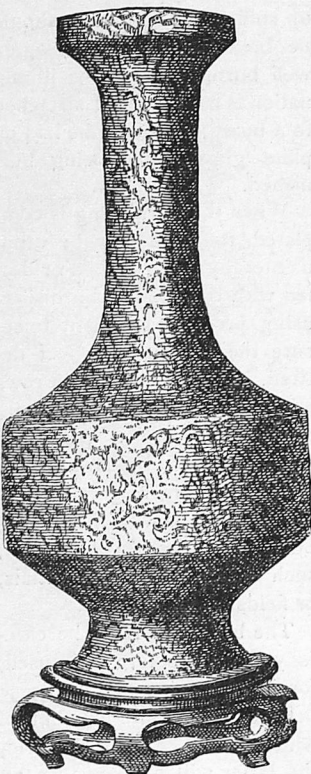


THE ceramic artists of the far East, as we all know, have an agreeable way of breaking up the surface of a vase painted in monochrome by distributing all over it, without any set design, the same color in varying degrees of intensity, or by streaking or "flashing" one color with another. This gives a tone often more beautiful to

the eye than the solid color. It is doubtless owing to this Oriental love of variety, even in the simplest applications of color, that we are indebted for the crackled, the marbled, the flashed, and the other kinds of seemingly almost accidental decoration familiar to connoisseurs.

The illustrations given herewith of marbled and crackled decoration convey perhaps as good an idea of the appearance of these varieties as can be given without the use of color. The crackle effect no doubt was at first produced by accident—being nothing more or less than the "crazing" or cracking of the enamel which occurs when the piece is taken from the kiln and allowed to cool too quickly. But the Chinese, who were the first to avail themselves of this peculiarity, were not satisfied until by experiments they had produced many varieties of crackle, which they learned to regulate with scientific accuracy. The crazing was emphasized by rubbing vegetable color into the fissures, or using a thick ink for the purpose when the enamel was gray. Among the different kinds of crackle the most delicate is that known as "truite," so called from its resemblance to the slender scales of the trout.

The "marbled" wine bottle is an example of decoration somewhat similar to crackle in general effect, but very differently produced. To effect this "marbling" the color is placed in a tube closed at one end with a very fine gauze; by blowing through the other end little drops are precipitated upon the ware; these trickle down in little veins, and the so-called "marbled" appearance results. By a peculiar preparation of the color the drops are filled with air, and upon striking against the side of the piece they burst and resolve themselves into little circles, forming a network like the finest lace. The "marbled" and the lace-like effects are both known as "soufflé" (blown) decoration.

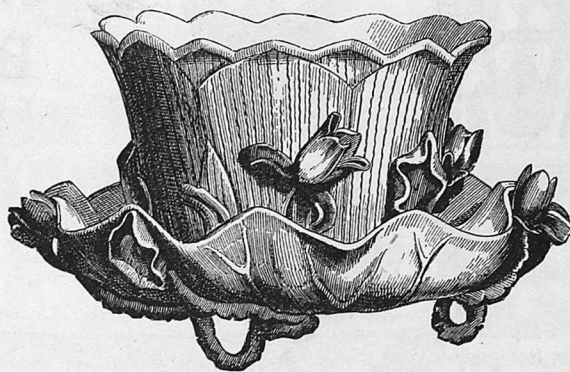


"MARBLED" WINE BOTTLE.

Another decorative device of the Oriental ceramists is the application to porcelain of a mosaic pattern resembling in little that employed in pavements, or imitating basket-work, the latter style being called by the French "clathré." Sometimes the porcelain is enveloped in a sheath made of actual bamboo. A cup thus enclosed, and a saucer with a border of "clathré" mosaic, are shown in the illustration on the opposite page. The reticulated Japanese pot in the same illus-

tration is a good example of another freak of the Orientals, frequently repeated by the potters of both France and England. This consists in making the vase or cup with a double wall, the inner one being solid while the outer one is an open network of porcelain, sometimes adherent to the inner and sometimes separate from it. This peculiarity of construction is not without a certain utility, especially in the case of teacups, as the reticulated wall makes it easy to hold the cup in the hand, no matter how hot the tea may be.

The surface of porcelain should never be wholly, or even largely covered. It should be borne in mind that the object of decoration is to embellish both the form and the material, and not to obscure either the one or



CUP SHAPED LIKE THE NELUMBO FLOWER.

the other. Completely metallizing china by gilding, or covering the entire surface with landscapes or natural flowers, is in bad taste. Marbleizing, with a view of pure imitation, is also much to be condemned, but when the decorative effect of marble is introduced, as with the Chinese and Japanese, merely to break the monotony of a solid color, it is permissible. The imitation of the ornament peculiar to one age and one purpose on the utensils of another age, which are intended for totally different uses, is as common a fault as applying the ornament of one material to the decoration of another. As is justly pointed out in Redgrave's "Manual of Design," the revivals of Wedgwood were, in a degree, in this spirit; and although they produced a vast change for the better in the forms of English pottery, and placed a salutary curb on the extravagance of the style that then obtained, they were but the resurrection of a dead art; and the funeral urns of Etruria, being inconsistent with modern uses, have a cold formality quite inconsonant with the feelings of the time. The writer, speaking of the abuse of the ornament of one material by its application to another, refers particularly to the copying of engravings and pictures on various utensils. He says: "In one case we have seen the most sacred symbols of religion used as the decorations for the borders of plates, while the centres of them, and of the dishes of the same set, consisted of angels, copied from an illustrated prayer-book, flying in the midst of a blue heaven diapered with stars. Such incongruities, improper in any case, are sadly and strangely inapplicable to a dinner-service. It has been well said, that symbolical ornament demands perfect accordance between the use of an object and its decoration; but can anything be more inharmonious than such sacred symbols mixed up with a festive dinner. Such incongruities are ever arising from unthinking imitation."

In applying the usual somewhat severe standard of criticism as to propriety in ceramic decoration, it is proper to distinguish clearly between objects intended for ornaments and works of utility. Thus Redgrave, while severely condemning "manufactures so over-decorated as to be degraded into mere ornaments" admits that when works are produced simply with that object, they may not only be admired as addressed to the purpose of giving pleasure by their beauty, but by their production may exercise a useful influence on the general taste of the manufacture, and he gives as an

example the present product of the Sèvres factory. Here we find the taste of the first artists assisted by the science of able chemists, and, under a judicious direction, united to the most skilful workmanship and manufacture, and the result is that the fabrication of porcelain is carried to the highest degree of excellence. The chefs d'œuvre of this factory, however, are works which must be classed as ornaments, such as vases, caskets, chalices, and tazzas. The forms adopted, heretofore so rococo, are pure, and those pure forms are rarely interfered with by reliefs. The details of the decoration, the modelling of the reliefs and the painting—whether these consist of figures, flowers, or simply of ornamental forms—are in many cases of rare and felicitous excellence, and of high merit in all.

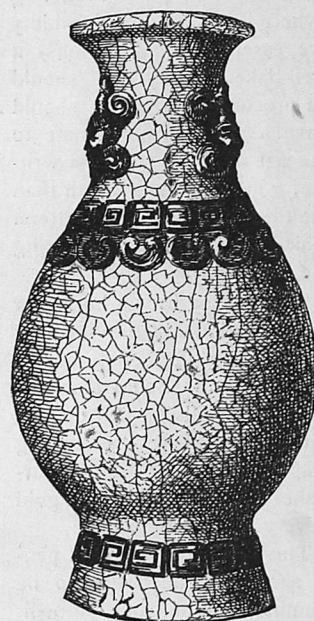
The example of modern Sèvres given herewith, while undeniably beautiful in parts of its decoration, we shall see is not a good model. The Chinese nelumbo cup, illustrated herewith, certainly is an object of utility converted into a mere ornament—no one would maintain that it is convenient for handling—but compare it with the French jardinière and judging it by the same rules of criticism—regarding both as mere ornaments—the jardinière falls far behind it in excellence.

Before proceeding to the comparison, it may not be out of place to say a few words about the nelumbo; for although frequently met with in Chinese art, it is not generally known that it has a symbolic meaning. It is essentially a Buddhist plant. Meeting it in surface decoration we find its leaves spreading upon a wave indicated by lines at exact distances; its flowers more or less advanced, bending their half-opened cups or their rosettes of fleshy petals upon delicate stalks, of which the spongy texture is expressed by a finely dotted line. The esteem in which it is held is very great. The Festival of the Nelumbo, Jacquemart tells us, is celebrated with no less pomp in the Chinese women's apartments than is that of the tulips in the harem of the Mussulman. He says: "If we could doubt the importance of the nelumbo, certain large vases would make us understand it. We find them decorated with boats filled with young women, their sleeves turned up to the shoulder, about to plunge their arms into the water, not only to gather the flowers, but to pick up the stalks already laden with the ripe fruit; through an archway opening to the palace the boats return, and upon an upper terrace the emperor and his family, surrounded by dignitaries, are about to make a traditional repast, consisting solely of the almonds of the nelumbo, which serves to recall annually to rich and poor alike the frugal mode of life of their ancestors."

There is some propriety then in the Chinese showing their love for this truly national flower

by adapting its form to that of a cup and its leaf to the purposes of a saucer. It would not be easy to find a better way of familiarizing it in domestic life. How naturally the nelumbo lends itself to this graceful treatment our illustration shows. Hence, if we cannot approve of a cup of a form impossible to handle with comfort and so fragile as to invite the servant to chip it, we can at least admire the delicate skill and ingenuity of the artist.

With our Sèvres jardinière, the case is different.



"CRACKLED" WINE BOTTLE.

Here we have no natural form readily adapting itself to that of some domestic utensil. Instead we find a vessel of no particular shape in nature, but suggesting that of some sea-shell, with the aim apparently of introducing a pictorial decoration with a fresh water subject. And, as if this were not sufficiently incongruous, the picture is flanked by plants in relief which even the most good natured naturalist would scarcely consent to admit as aquatic. The panel decoration in *pâte-sur-pâte* is in the style of Solon, with whose charming designs our readers have already been made familiar by numerous interesting illustrations.

NOTES ON UNDERGLAZE PAINTING.

If the color, directly it is put on, soaks into the ware and appears dry, either the ware (if it has been so treated) has not a sufficient coating of size, or the color is not sufficiently oily. In underglaze painting it is almost impossible to use too much oil. Great care should be taken, especially when working with gum, to lay the color on evenly. It is very useful when beginning underglaze painting to practise laying on backgrounds, having them fired and glazed for future enamel work. In all underglaze work these should be laid on in oil.

In painting heads, care should be taken not to get the background too heavy or too dark, unless considerably broken up. Pattern designs, in monochrome, or two or three colors, may also with advantage be worked by the beginner in underglaze. As a rule (although it is very true that care should be taken not to lay the color on too thickly), underglaze coloring should be considerably stronger than the ultimate effect required, to allow for the firing out of the colors. It should be remembered that underglaze blues and greens fire stronger, whereas yellows and oranges sometimes fire out altogether. When gum has been used as the medium, it can be washed out again with water, and color laid on with oil can be more or less removed with turpentine. It is often useful to draw the design on bisque ware with a black lead pencil, the marks of which can be rubbed out with bread.

It is best to master thoroughly the peculiarities of the few underglaze colors available to the ceramic artist before endeavoring to produce landscape and elaborate work with them. This class of paintings on pottery is usually begun on the bisque and finished on the glaze. This is the best plan for painting portraits. As a rule, as much as possible should be done on the bisque, though it should be remembered that any work once fired on the bisque can never be got out again, and it is not well for beginners to attempt too much. It is often very useful to outline designs on the bisque, and then to have them fired and glazed, when the outline will be ready for the enamel painting, and it has this great advantage, that it is permanent; and the enamel painting on the piece, if unsatisfactory before it has been fired, can be rubbed out with turpentine, but the outline, of course, always remains.

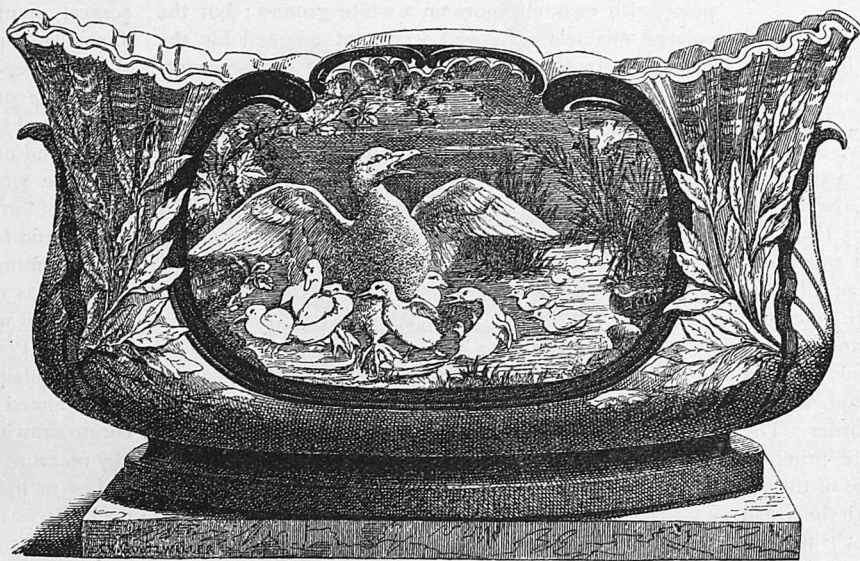
When doing heads or elaborate work on the bisque, it will be found very convenient to commence the subject with colors mixed with gum and water, and to finish and strengthen it over them with the same colors, using oil as a medium. It is necessary to do almost all painting on the bisque considerably stronger than would be the case if the colors did not disappear so much in the fire.

With regard to landscape painting on pottery, by far the best effects can be produced on the bisque, especially on cream-colored ware and majolica. In painting landscapes under the glaze it will be found best to try for simple effects of sky with flat coloring; but the most suitable are foliage subjects of a subdued

green and brown character, deriving their principal interest from prominent figures. The figures may be more or less elaborately worked out, and the landscape should be subordinated to them.

It should be remembered, especially in landscape painting, that the work should have a considerably darker appearance before it is fired than the ultimate effect aimed at. It should also be remembered that the firing of underglaze pieces is a much longer, more un-

subject and features, and, in a less degree, the locality and depth of the shadows. Some good portraits are done entirely by line work on porcelain, and also on ordinary wares, both over and under glaze. Some inks (probably containing iron or some other metal), when used on the bisque, turn brown and reddish in firing, and line drawings can thus be produced by their use under the glaze. The amateur in "Limoges" painting will find on the first page of the supplement an excellent design, by Mr. Charles Volkmar, for the decoration of a plaque.

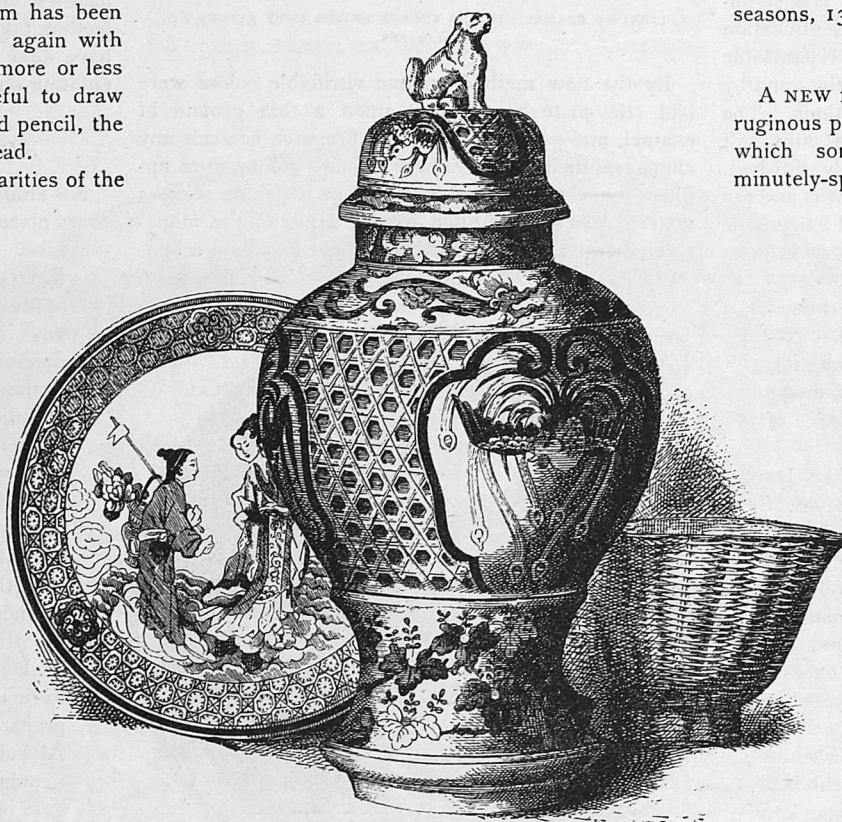


SÈVRES JARDINIÈRE IN PÂTE-SUR-PÂTE.

MODERN SÈVRES.

EVERY one knows that the French National Sèvres Manufactory works exclusively at the expense and for the account of the State. None of its products can, therefore, be sold direct from the manufactory, and the numerous articles of real Sèvres porcelain to be met with at public sales must invariably have been originally the property of persons who had received them as presents from the chief of the State or the government. Thus, on the occasion of the 1878 International Exhibition, a number of vases, worth, at cost price of production, about £60 each, were presented to various personages as a reward for special services. In the case of Sèvres china, as with pictures, the prices realized

are, therefore, purely conventional, depending upon the rarity and beauty of the object in question and the number of intending purchasers. In order to render more interesting and practical the Exhibition of Sèvres open to the public at the manufactory, the administration has just decided that all the principal works on view shall bear their cost of production. The objects now on view there include a large vase, green and blue ground, figure of Neptune, marked 1800 f.; a Mayeux vase, destined for the Louvre, 15,600 f.; two other chalice-shaped vases, with paintings representing the seasons, 13,700 f.; and a cup (War), 15,550 f.



ORIENTAL PORCELAIN.

SAUCER WITH MOSAIC BORDER. CUP SHEATHED WITH BAMBOO. RETICULATED JAPANESE POT.

with the face and features, or arms and hands, or any flesh, is perfectly free from blemish. Special hair pencils can be obtained for miniature painting, but, as a rule, a larger brush, provided it has a fine point, will be found the best to work with. It is particularly important to have good brushes for miniature painting. When copying portraits from photographs, the features, and especially the eyes, should be exaggerated. Photographs should only be used, even the best, as suggesting the general configuration and outline of the

A NEW magnetic contrivance for extracting the ferruginous particles from the paste used for porcelain which sometimes give the articles a color, or a minutely-spotted appearance, where a pure white is desired, is in operation at the French pottery works of Creil and of Pillivuyt & Co. of Mehun-sur-Yèvre. It is also announced that a porous porcelain or earthenware is being produced by Herr Buchholz, of Charlottenburg, by mixing the prepared paste with matters which burn while the wares are baked, and leave the spaces they previously took up empty, except a little ash. Different kinds of matter for the purpose are taken, according to the kind of pores desired. Seed-grains of various kinds and sizes are suitable, especially poor corn; still better, thin rods of willow, birch or hazel, cut up into small pieces, which are sorted, and rounded in a mill. Herr Buchholz also utilizes the same principle for producing regular, continuous pores or apertures in porcelain ware by means of wooden rods embedded in particular directions in the paste.

AMATEUR pottery painters discouraged at the difficulties in getting their work successfully fired may be interested to learn that a Dr. Jakobsen of

Berlin has invented a new system of transparent majolica lacquer painting by which the colors need not be burned in. They dry quickly and will then withstand cold water, and even resist scratching with a knife. Painting can be done with them in the same way as oil colors, but they dry quicker than the latter. On account of their transparency they can only be used on a white or light ground, or as transparencies on glass (such as magic-lantern slides). On porcelain or faience they produce the effect of burnt porcelain colors.